
Ride!

magazine

Slaughter transport legislation passed by Congress

The controversial Commercial Transportation of Equine for Slaughter Act was passed by the full Congress March 28, giving the Secretary of Agriculture authority to regulate individuals who ship horses across the country for slaughter.

Horse shipped to slaughter to be used as meat for export to Europe. In France and other countries, horse meat is considered a delicacy.

The bill is backed by numerous horse and animal welfare groups, but is also considered poor law by other equine associations. Those opposed say the bill, which among other things calls for mandatory feed, water and rest every 24 hours, is too lenient and only gives credence to a business that should be outlawed.

The original bill, introduced by Senator Mitch McConnell (R_KY) and Congressman Bill Goodling (R-PA), was more prescriptive than the final version, which was part of the Farm Bill. The Senate passed the bill, but the House of Representatives did not include it in the Farm Bill. The final version was passed after negotiations between both Senate and House politicians.

The legislation provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to regulate slaughter transport businesses, such as reviewing the food, water and rest provided to equines in transit and the segregation of stallions from other horses in transit. The Secretary can also require trip record and report maintenance, conduct investigations and inspections and establish and enforce penalties. It does not give the Secretary of Agriculture power over transport of non-slaughter horses.

"We must now work with the Secretary of Agriculture to formulate regulations that will ensure that horses are transported as safely and humanely as possible," said James Hickey, president of the American Horse Council, which backed the bill. "We must also continue our efforts to see that the Department has sufficient funds to set up and enforce a good and effective program."